CONFERENCE OF THE SPEAKERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS
Rome, 20th and 21st April 2015

CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESIDENCY

Preliminary remarks

The Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union was held in Rome at the Chamber of Deputies on 20th and 21st April 2015, and attended by the Speakers and Presidents or their representatives of 37 Parliaments/Chambers of 28 member states as well as by the President of the European Parliament. Also taking part were the Speakers and Presidents or their representatives of the Parliaments of 4 EU candidate countries. The Conference was chaired by Laura Boldrini and Pietro Grasso, Presidents of Italy's Chamber of Deputies and Senate, respectively.

Recalling paragraph 5.1 of the Stockholm Guidelines, it is recognised that the Speakers of certain Chambers, because of their constitutional position, cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, they recognise on behalf of their Chambers the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.

The Conference was divided into five sessions:

1. "Europe beyond the crisis: new paths for growth." The session began with keynote presentations by economist Jeremy Rifkin, founder and president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, and by Claude Bartolone, President of the French National Assembly.
2. "The Continent of Fundamental Rights: a Europe of freedom, solidarity and security." The session began with keynote presentations by: Jean-Claude Bonichot, Judge at the European Court of Justice; Mars Di Bartolomeo, President of the Parliament of Luxembourg; Zoi Konstantopoulou, President of the Hellenic Parliament; and Morten Kjaerum, current director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and former director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
3. "The role of the European Union Parliaments in negotiations on international treaties". The session began with keynote presentations by: Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament; Anouchka Van Miltenburg, President of the Dutch House of Representatives; Pascal Lamy, President emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, former European Commissioner for Trade and former Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO); and Rosa Pavanelli, Secretary General of Public Services International.

4. "Discussion and approval of principles on the Rules of Procedure of the Conference pursuant to Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, as well as discussion and approval of the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference for the CFSP-CSDP".
5. "Strengthening political dialogue". The session began with a keynote presentation by Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Parliament of Lithuania.

On "Europe beyond the crisis: new paths for growth"

1. The Speakers recognise that the crisis has had an enduring adverse impact on production systems, employment and the living standards of people.
2. The Speakers take note that the European economy is showing some signs of recovery, albeit modest, but that the economic situation is still uncertain, with low investment, high unemployment, especially among young people.
3. The Speakers recognise that distrust in the EU's ability to respond adequately to the challenges posed by the crisis remains widespread among its citizens. They therefore agree on the need to put in place innovative solutions that can both overcome structural weaknesses and make optimal use of the special economic and social qualities of the EU. To this end, they support the development of a mix of policies aimed at modernising the European model of growth and making it more competitive at a global level, in any case safeguarding the social market economy model and keeping in due consideration the social implications.
4. The Speakers therefore welcome the new initiatives undertaken by the institutions of the European Union to boost growth, support investment and mitigate the pro-cyclical effects of fiscal consolidation policies, and welcome, in particular:
   - the "Investment Plan for Europe" which can help to strengthen public and private investment in order to increase productivity and competitiveness;
   - the package of proposals for building an energy union, which will mark a strategic step towards strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of European productions systems.

   The Speakers particularly look forward to the early adoption of the Regulation establishing the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI).
5. The Speakers acknowledge and welcome the European Central Bank's unconventional monetary policy, especially its 'quantitative easing' programme to purchase government and private sector bonds. The Speakers believe that this policy can contribute to the further recovery of the European economy in the short run by eliminating deflationary risks.
6. The Speakers are following with interest the revision of the Europe 2020 Strategy, whose implementation has so far not been fully satisfactory with respect to the targets set.

7. The Speakers are also closely following the development of a new European industrial policy whose aim, as proposed by the European Commission, is to boost the global competitiveness of the manufacturing sector.

On "The continent of fundamental rights"

1. The Speakers reiterate that the European Union is a point of reference for the protection of fundamental rights, not only for its own citizens, but also for all those who live within its borders.
2. The Speakers call on the EU institutions to push on the accession process of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights.
3. The Speakers underscore the particular value of the European experience in this field at a time of growing international conflicts and tension, including between Russia and Ukraine, and of increasing prevalence of cross-border crime and international terrorism, in particular organized by the so called ISIS. This situation needs to be tackled in a manner that assumes both solidarity and unity of the Member States and strikes a balance between the legitimate demands of citizens for greater security and the imperative that the protection of freedoms and rights must not be prejudiced. With reference to the foregoing, they welcome the start of the preliminary work for the preparation of a new Internal Security Strategy for the European Union, and hope to see its rapid adoption.
4. The Speakers acknowledge the need for more robust and tighter procedures to monitor the level of protection afforded to fundamental rights within Member States, and welcome the important steps taken in this direction both by the European Commission through the publication of a Communication on a new legal framework to strengthen the rule of law (which would include an early-warning system to detect violations of fundamental rights), and by the Council, which has undertaken to devote a special annual session to appraising the state of health of the rule of law and its observance in Member States. The Speakers also hope to see a strengthening of measures to combat racism, hostility to minority groups and discrimination based on sexual orientation. The need for such measures has been made all the more urgent by the increase in these phenomena within the EU. For strengthening the European Union as a community of democratic rights and equality, the Speakers also emphasise the importance of an appropriate legal framework for protecting the rights of the persons and communities of national minorities and other minorities such as Roma.
5. The Speakers are following with particular interest the preparation of an Agenda for migration which should comprehensively address the issue with reference to four priorities: consolidating the common system of asylum; updating European policy on regular immigration; stepping up measures to counter irregular immigration and human trafficking; and adopting stronger measures for the control of the EU's external borders. Following the latest humanitarian tragedies in the Mediterranean they expect the Commission to show the

strongest possible ambition in coming up with common European solutions in a spirit of solidarity and sharing of responsibilities between Member States.

6. The Speakers stress that for the sake of maintaining its pre-eminent position as a protector of fundamental rights and human dignity, the European Union needs to take concrete and immediate action to deal more effectively with the tragedies at sea caused by the increase of migration flows from the southern shores of the Mediterranean and also to deal with the problems caused by the wave of refugees coming from the Eastern Schengen borders. Furthermore, it is important to maintain a constant focus on the external land borders of the EU on the permanently affected routes. They welcome the commitment of the Council to increasing the funding and resources of FRONTEX, enhancing dialogue and cooperation with the countries of transit, seeking solutions to the causes of migration in the countries of origin, and giving full effect to the principle of active and effective solidarity in all areas of burden sharing with those countries most affected to the inflow of migrants. They also hope that additional funding and resources would improve the ability of FRONTEX as regards its search and rescue at sea mandate according to the International Maritime Law**.**

On "The role of the European Union Parliaments in negotiations on international treaties"

1. The Speakers recognise that the question of the role that EU Parliaments can play in the negotiations on agreements between the Union and third parties has acquired a particularly topical relevance as a result of the growing interest of citizens and civil society in three important negotiations: TISA, CETA and, most of all, TTIP.
2. The Speakers especially welcome the decision of the Council to authorise the Commission to make its negotiating mandates public for the first time ever. They likewise welcome the European Commission's undertaking to: make public a greater number of the texts relating to the negotiations on the TTIP (as already disclosed to Member States and the European Parliament); reduce the number of restricted-access documents; grant access to the texts relating to the TTIP for all the Members of the European Parliament by means of the so-called "reading room". They invite the European Commission to grant the same access the Members of national Parliaments.
3. The Speakers express their appreciation for the resolute commitment of the European Parliament to activating and applying the new powers conferred to it by article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and for its decision to approve, before the end of May, specific recommendations for the European Commission relating to the current negotiations on the TTIP.
4. The Speakers reaffirm that national Parliaments must be granted the possibility of performing specific competences in relation to as many free-trade agreements as possible and, more generally, be accorded greater access to information relating to ongoing negotiations, so that they might make their orientations known during the negotiations

themselves rather than have their powers of intervention restricted to the ratification process only.

5. The Speakers consider that it is of the utmost importance for national Parliaments to play a definite role in discussing and ratifying the entry into force of the TTIP, CETA and TISA agreements.

Discussion and approval of the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference for the CFSP-CSDP; discussion and approval of principles on the Rules of Procedure of the Conference under Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union.

1. The Speakers welcome the conclusion of the review conducted by the Conference for the CFSP/CSDP regarding its functioning and the Rules of Procedure and Best Practices document adopted by that Conference in its meeting in Rome on 6-7 November 2014. The Speakers thank the Conference, the Ad Hoc Review Committee and the Working Group for their work.
2. The Speakers note that the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU has not yet adopted a set of Rules of Procedure after discussions held so far.
3. In the light of this, the Speakers discussed and agreed principles regarding the Rules of procedure of the Conference, in line with Speakers' previous Conclusions agreed in Nicosia. The following principles shall be transposed in detailed Rules of procedure by the next Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU:
   a) The Conference, following Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, should be named “Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union”.
   b) The Interparliamentary Conference should provide a framework for debate and exchange of information and best practices in implementing the provisions of the Treaty in order to strengthen cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament and contribute to ensuring democratic accountability in the area of economic governance and budgetary policy in the EU, particularly in the EMU, taking into account the social dimension and without prejudice to the competences of EU Parliaments.
   c) The Interparliamentary Conference should replace the meetings of the chairpersons of relevant committees organised in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council by the national Parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency, hereinafter referred to as the Presidency Parliament.
   d) The Interparliamentary Conference should be composed of delegations from the relevant committees of the national Parliaments of EU Members States and the European Parliament. The composition and size of delegations shall be determined by each Parliament.

e) The Interparliamentary Conference should convene at least twice a year, in coordination with the cycle of the European Semester. In the first semester of each year, it should be held in Brussels and will be co-hosted and co-presided over by the Presidency Parliament and the European Parliament. In the second semester of each year, it should be held in the Member State holding the Presidency and presided over by the Presidency Parliament. In order to enhance the parliamentary role, the Conferences should be convened before the presentation of the Annual Growth Survey and the adoption of the National Reform Programmes.
f) The President of the European Council, the President of the Eurogroup and the relevant members of the European Commission and other EU Institutions should be invited to the Interparliamentary Conference to set out the priorities and strategies of the EU in the areas being discussed by the Conference.
g) A draft agenda to be submitted to other Parliaments should be drawn up by the Presidency Parliament in close cooperation with the Presidential Troika. The Presidential Troika of the Interparliamentary Conference should consist of the delegations of the current, preceding and following Presidency Parliaments and of the European Parliament
h) The Presidency Parliament may present non-binding conclusions on the outcome of the meeting in English and French.
i) The working languages of the Interparliamentary Conference should be English and French.

On “Strengthening political dialogue”

1. The Speakers note that, although not expressly provided for in the Treaties, political dialogue now constitutes the main channel of interaction between national Parliaments and the institutions of the EU, in that it encourages the exchange of views on the merits of the political and legislative choices of the European Union as well as on aspects pertaining to their respective areas of competence.
2. The Speakers therefore hope to see an enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of political dialogue. In furtherance of this, the Speakers believe that the contributions of national Parliaments need to be made as much as possible at the early stages of the legislative process, before the start of inter-institutional negotiations, and that, especially as regards European Commission’s consultation documents, greater use should be made of political dialogue in the pre-legislative phase, when there is more potential to perform guidance functions.
3. The Speakers call on the European Commission to improve the promptness and quality of its responses to the contributions it receives from national Parliaments.
4. The Speakers welcome the initiatives of the new European Commission, and, in particular, the undertaking of the European Commissioners to increase the number of meetings with

national Parliaments for the purpose of discussing legislative proposals and/or other initiatives of the Commission and to intervene personally in the preparation of responses to the contributions of national Parliaments.

5. The Speakers also look forward to the strengthening of political dialogue between national Parliaments and the European Parliament enhancing the cooperation between the rapporteurs of the European Parliament and of national Parliaments.
6. The Speakers are following with interest the debate on the role of the institutions and national Parliaments of the EU taking place within the COSAC, including the discussions on strengthening the instruments of political dialogue. Discussion on these matters will be taken up again at the 2016 Conference of Speakers, at which the outcome of the discussions of the next COSAC will also be taken into consideration.

On IPEX

1. The Speakers welcome the Conclusions on IPEX adopted at the Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments held in Rome on 15th March, and express the hope that the new organisational structure of IPEX, with a rotating presidency of the Board and an increased role for the Information Officer, will help improve its efficiency and enhance the sense of shared ownership by all EU Parliaments.
2. The Speakers thank the *Seimas* of the Republic of Lithuania for its work and the results produced during the year of the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the IPEX Board, the Senate of Belgium for its willingness to recruit the Information Officer under Belgian employment law, the Danish Parliament for organising the first IPEX-user Conference on 26th January in Copenhagen, and the European Parliament for its support and efforts to further the development of IPEX.
3. The Speakers have assigned the Italian Chair of the Board the task of continuing with the joint examination of the role and potential of the IPEX system. They renew their invitation to all Parliaments to ensure that the IPEX database includes brief summaries in English or French and other languages of all major decisions they have taken in connection with the legislative proposals or documents of the European Union. They also look forward to an expansion in the exchange of information and documents on EU-related activities of Parliaments through IPEX correspondents, in addition to the existing database.